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Foreword

In his informative and stimulating introduction to the present volume, Dr. Dube has said, '. . . . what we need to-day is a series of studies of village communities from different parts of the country covering the many divergent patterns of organization and ethos.' Dr. Dube has not only stated the need; he has shown us what can be achieved in striving to meet it. His volume is a solid study and one which will doubtless take its place among the standard community studies made in various parts of the world which he cites in his bibliography.

In a number of ways this volume is especially valuable and challenging and is a tonic to present-day research into Indian village life. In the first place, it is a total study, not in the sense that it gives us all possible details concerning the village Shamirpet, but in the sense that it presents between two covers all important aspects of the culture of this community. Though the author has been at pains to keep the account fairly general and uncluttered, the reader receives a convincing and reasonably adequate introduction to the historical, geographical, and political setting and the social, economic, and ritual structure of the village described. One puts the book down with a feeling that one has really come to know Shamirpet, its background, people, and problems quite well; even if everything about something is not there, something about almost everything is given. This is almost a departure in social science writing about Indian village life. Such studies have tended to be topical, specialized, and often too brief. Of attempts to give a sustained, many-sided picture of an Indian community we have very few; there are Gertrude

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Emerson's *Voiceless India* and William Wiser's *Behind Mud Walls*, both pioneer efforts, and a few others.

There are a good many reasons why more total studies of Indian villages have not been written to date, but one obvious reason should not be overlooked—the study of Indian village life yields material extremely complex and difficult to deal with in this manner. The village is a unity, yet half of its adult population, the women, come from outside communities with which the village is linked by complicated marriage relations. Each individual belongs to a caste which exercises a great deal of control over him, yet whose ruling group has jurisdiction far beyond the village confines. Each one of the many castes is a veritable subculture, with special traditions, prerogatives, rituals, food habits, and status, and this caste and its attributes is ordinarily a regional or national rather than a village phenomenon. Moreover, Indian culture and philosophy are old and rich. It is not easy to do justice to these background traditions which are the ultimate basis of much that goes on in present-day Indian village life and yet convey freshly and convincingly the localized, modern derivative of these historic impulses. And in this instance Dr. Dube's task was not made easier by the presence, in this village, of a sizeable group of Muslims. Consequently, at least on the religious side, he had two great traditions with which village activities had to be linked, and in terms of which they had to be interpreted. It was necessary to take into consideration all these outside influences and links, and still retain a focus on the village. Only those who have struggled with the intricacies of Indian village material and have before them the task of ordering it can fully appreciate Dr. Dube's accomplishment.

But this study has more to recommend it than that the author has given us ample coverage and has not been distracted from his central object. One of its attractions is that it rises above mere description; it provides analytical insights and provocative concepts. Students of Indian village culture and of folk culture in general will do well to examine Dr. Dube's definition and treatment of 'allied families' (as distinct from the lineage or general body of close relatives). Again, by analysing out six major factors which contribute toward status differentiation in Shamirpet, the author cuts through a bewildering maze of data and provides a key to the understanding of the relative status positions of the sub-

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groups of the village and of individuals within these sub-groups. There is nothing remarkable or even particularly original in the factors he recognizes, but their application to the data in context is illuminating. It is the same with the identification of the new set of influences which, according to the author, are to-day playing upon the community. Whether the list is complete or not, it serves to explain much that has happened in the recent past and acts as a guide, or at least a hypothesis, to predict some future developments.

Dr. Dube's book has still another attribute which will intrigue many readers. He is not only interested in principles or factors which will illuminate specific aspects of the culture, but he is searching for abstractions of a higher level, integrating ideas which characterize and colour the entire culture. This quest is particularly marked in the concluding pages where 'the adjustment of the individual to the universe . . . peaceful adjustment and adaptation to the laws that control the universe,' and the tendency 'to view everything as hierarchically structured' are singled out as fundamental drives in the thought and activities of the group. The interest in discovering the kind and number of unifying and harmonizing principles which can be identified for any culture is strong to-day, and Dr. Dube's views of the binding forces in Indian culture and the effect of contemporary events upon them should receive close attention.

In the 'boiling down' of a large body of data to book size, it is often the sad fact that the vital essence is boiled off and a flavourless brew is left. Dr. Dube has off-set this necessity for general statement and summary by introducing source material and case material at strategic intervals. In this way, we are constantly reminded that even the statistics point to the joys and sorrows, triumphs and defeats of very real people and very vivid personalities.

The volume has one other characteristic which deserves attention. The data which have gone into it are the product of group research. It is, in fact, one of the first examples of what can be accomplished through a group, inter-disciplinary approach. More than eighteen staff members and students of Osmania University gathered the material under Dr. Dube's direction. Six faculties of the university were represented in the effort. Much of the material which the natural scientists collected is technical

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Most of the chapters of this book were written in 1952–53 in London where I had an appointment as Visiting Lecturer in Indian Anthropology in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. I had the benefit of discussing some of this material with Professor Christoph von Fürer-Haimendorf, Professor of Asian Anthropology in the University of London, and

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3. The members of this local group are bound together by ties
621 of mutual and reciprocal obligations. Inter-personal and inter-
184 group relations in several spheres of village affairs are governed by
626 an established usage and social ethics. Breaches of the norms of the community and its established usage are dealt with either by the village elders or by a village council. The village council, speaking for the village, has the final authority of social ostracism through which it can effectively enforce its sanctions.

III

114 Modern community studies represent a very significant development in the field of social anthropology and sociology. The concepts and techniques formerly applied to the study and analysis of primitive and isolated tribal societies are now being adapted for the study of peasant communities, non-literate as well as literate, and also for the analysis of more complex and industrialized communities. This new direction in the focus of interest of an increasing number of social scientists and field-workers has inevitably led to important modifications in our conceptual framework and to a sharpening of our tools of research. The methodology of social sciences and techniques of field research have both gained very considerably from this new trend. The work of Robert Redfield, John Gillin, Sol Tax and Ralph Beals, among others, represents a substantial advance in this field, both in theory and in methodology. From Robert Redfield's *Tepotzlan: A Mexican Village* to Oscar Lewis's *Life in a Mexican Village: Tepotzlan Re-Studied* this branch of social anthropological enquiry has travelled far: the former inaugurated an epoch, which then appeared to be full of promise; the latter is a convincing proof of its maturity. On Middle America we now have a series of interesting and useful studies. In other parts of the world also important researches of this kind have been made. Studies of the great peasant societies of the East received encouragement and support from scholars both in Great Britain and in the United States. Malinowski's and Radcliffe-Brown's forewords to the works of Fei and Embree bear testimony to the interest evinced in community studies by the British social anthropologists. The work of Martin C. Yang and Francis L. K. Hsu received constructive support in the United States. A remarkable feature of some of these Far Eastern studies is that they were done not by Western scientists but by scholars

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who were born and brought up more or less in the very social setting that they were describing. Of course, the level of analysis in these works differs considerably, ranging from somewhat impressionistic accounts to fairly deep sociological and economic analyses, but they constitute a departure of no mean significance in anthropology as being symbols of an awakening of interest in people for the anthropological and sociological study of their own society. The range of such studies has indeed been wide enough and has included several Western societies as well. Contributions such as *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* by W. I. Thomas and Florian Znaniecki, *The Irish Countryman* by Conrad Arensberg, *Life in a Welsh Countryside* by Alwyn D. Rees, although they are the outcome of different research techniques and present different levels of analyses, provide much useful material for comparative studies. Mention must be made, in this connection, of the important and stimulating work of the Lynds and of the Warner school in the analysis of more complex communities. *Middletown* and its successor *Middletown in Transition* by R. S. and H. M. Lynd have justly come to be regarded as classics in this field. *The Social Life of a Modern Community* and *The Status System of a Modern Community* by W. L. Warner and Paul S. Lunt, and *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups* by W. L. Warner and Leo Srole, too, are equally outstanding works in this class. Some of the works listed above have provided the impetus for more community studies in different parts of the world—in the so-called under-developed areas as well as in technologically advanced, industrialized countries. At the present time very considerable field research either has been done or is being done in many parts of the world—in Middle America, in Puerto Rico (under the direction of Julian Steward), in Great Britain (by the Edinburgh University, under the direction of Kenneth L. Little) and in India (by the Cornell group under the direction of Morris E. Opler, and by some Indian universities).

Studies of modern communities as well as of non-literate or technologically 'under-developed' societies whose traditions are rooted in great civilizations of antiquity present a series of practical and methodological problems. Modern communities are larger—both in population and spatial distribution—compared with the primitive societies hitherto studied by anthropologists. This makes it difficult for the anthropologist and his associates to

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121 arising in their respective fields, and were to help in doing specific investigations which were assigned to them from time to time. I had the privilege of directing both the research and the social service programme, and while the units were left free to a considerable extent in their respective welfare work, I was associated with the planning, direction and conduct of the research itself at 121 every stage. The inter-faculty teams worked in the village for two 114 summer vacations—extending to twenty weeks—and the anthropological unit remained in touch with the village for a whole year. At various stages the larger team included three women members —a doctor, a sociologist belonging to the Muslim community for work among the *purdah*-observing Muslim women, and an American lady, with training in psychology and anthropology, who was a 'guest' member of the team. The anthropology unit consisted of five members, each with post-graduate training in anthropology, four of whom spoke the regional language of the village and had spent many years in the countryside of the Telangana area of Hyderabad. Three of these members had previous training in practical field-work. As they were all Hindus by birth, we had further to seek the help of a woman lecturer trained in sociology for work among the Muslim women.

123 To begin with, the response of the village people was rather 609 cold. For a short while we were regarded as missionaries; then as government agents brought into the village for organizing anti-communist propaganda. Some high-caste Hindus thought that we were there to instigate the low-caste untouchables to revolt against them. But our resources, especially our tents, crockery and cooks and buses, impressed them. The co-operation of highly placed officials rehabilitated us in the eyes of the village folk, and many of them who went to the city and made enquiries about us from educated relations returned to the village satisfied about our credentials. But more than all this, the excellent work of the Medical unit established rapport with the community, and the sympathetic welfare activities of the Agriculture, Veterinary and Education units further helped us to establish more intimate contacts with the people. They were benefiting by our presence: in the first two months 390 cases were treated by the Medical unit; several useful demonstrations were given by the Agriculture and Veterinary units, who also distributed vegetable seeds, plants of fruit-bearing trees and modern chemical fertilizers. The adult

RITUAL STRUCTURE

Hinduism in the course of the last four or five generations. They do not believe in any of the gods of the Hindu Trinity, nor in any of the later incarnations; but they share with the Hindus a living faith in the existence of malevolent ghosts, spirits and witches. They participate with the rest of the community in village ceremonies and sacrifices. To ward off cholera, plague and smallpox, they too think that it is necessary to propitiate the local deities and goddesses.

Village Hinduism is not easy to describe. It is an extremely elastic religion, and within its all-India framework admits of a considerable degree of regional and local variation. In his *Religion and Society among the Coorgs of South India*, M. N. Srinivas has introduced the useful concept of 'spread', and split up village Hinduism into 'All India Hinduism', 'Peninsular Hinduism', 'Regional Hinduism', and 'Local Hinduism'.

The people of Shamirpet worship all the major gods of the Hindu pantheon, but many of their cults distinctly belong to the complex of ritual that can be regarded as peculiar to peninsular India. Some of these observances present variations which are confined only to this particular village.

The Hindu concept of a Trinity, comprising three manifestations of divinity—Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the sustainer; and Shiva, the destroyer—has an all-India spread, and in common with the Hindus of the other parts of India the residents of Shamirpet principally worship either Shiva, or Vishnu and his numerous incarnations—particularly Rama and Krishna. The concepts of soul (*atma*), of the reckoning of an individual's actions and their consequences on his present and future life (the concept of *karma*), of laying emphasis on the right ordering of life and on doing what is just and moral (concept of *dharma*), of heaven and hell, and finally of the transmigration of the soul and its re-birth also have such an all-India spread; although there are significant regional and local variations in their details. Finally, the nature of rituals connected with the human life-cycle has been very considerably influenced by the Sanskritic ritual of all-India Hinduism, but it still continues to be characterized by some distinctive regional peculiarities.

All over India some rivers are regarded as sacred, and legends and cults grow around them. The Godavari is among the rivers whose sanctity and importance have been enhanced by prominent

[The Muslims — Analyst]